

1 Carol A Sobel SBN 84483  
2 Weston Rowland SBN 327599  
3 Law Office of Carol A. Sobel  
4 2632 Wilshire Boulevard, #552  
5 Santa Monica, CA 90403  
6 t. (310) 393-3055  
7 e. carolsobellaw@gmail.com  
8 e. rowland.weston@gmail.com

9 David Loy SBN 229235  
10 Aaron R. Field SBN 310648  
11 First Amendment Coalition  
12 534 4th St., Suite B  
13 San Rafael, CA 94901  
14 t.(415) 460-5060  
15 e. dloy@firstamendmentcoalition.org  
16 e. afield@firstamendmentcoalition.org

17 Peter Bibring SBN 223981  
18 Law Office of Peter Bibring  
19 2140 W Sunset Blvd # 203,  
20 Los Angeles, CA 90026  
21 t.(213) 471-2022  
22 e. peter@bibringlaw.com

23 Paul Hoffman, SBN 71244  
24 Michael Seplow, SBN 150183  
25 John Washington, SBN 315991  
26 Schonbrun, Seplow, Harris, Hoffman  
27 & Zeldes LLP  
28 200 Pier Avenue #226  
Hermosa Beach, California 90254  
t.(310) 396-0731  
e. [hoffpaul@aol.com](mailto:hoffpaul@aol.com)  
e. [mseplow@sshhzlaw.com](mailto:mseplow@sshhzlaw.com)  
e. [jwashington@sshhlaw.com](mailto:jwashington@sshhlaw.com)

Susan E Seager SBN 204824  
Law Office of Susan Seager  
128 N. Fair Oaks Avenue  
Pasadena, CA 91103  
t. (310) 890-8991  
e. [susanseager1999@gmail.com](mailto:susanseager1999@gmail.com)

14 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**  
15 **CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA – WESTERN DIVISION**

16 LOS ANGELES PRESS CLUB,  
17 STATUS COUP,

18 PLAINTIFFS,

19 v.

20 CITY OF LOS ANGELES, a municipal  
21 entity, JIM MCDONNELL, LAPD  
22 CHIEF, sued in his official capacity;

23 DEFENDANTS.

24 Case No. 2:25-CV-05423-HDV-E

25 Hon. Hernan D. Vera

26 **DECLARATION OF CONSTANZA**  
27 **ELIANA CHINEA MERCADO**

1 I, Constanza Eliana Chinea Mercado, declare as follows:

2 1. I make this declaration based on my own personal knowledge and if  
3 called to testify I could and would do so competently as follows:

4 2. I am submitting this declaration to describe how Los Angeles Police  
5 Department (“LAPD”) officers confined a group of press including myself away  
6 from protests by threatening us with arrest and indiscriminately deployed tear gas at  
7 a crowd including myself and other identified press.

8 3. I am a bilingual journalist and the founder of Malcriá Media, an  
9 independent media platform focusing on social justice, politics, and culture, and that  
10 centers marginalized perspectives. Under Malcriá Media, I host the Political  
11 Pendejadas podcast, covering political and social justice topics with influential  
12 guests.

13 4. I am currently a 2024–2026 California Local News Fellow selected by  
14 UC Berkeley’s Graduate School of Journalism, a state-funded initiative to pay early-  
15 career journalists to provide content for local journalism outlets, with a focus on  
16 underserved communities.

17 5. I am also a freelance reporter. I have contributed to the Los Angeles  
18 Times, KnockLA, The Young Turks, and Latino Rebels, LA Public Press, among  
19 others. In 2022, I co-hosted and produced the Spotify Original podcast Stranger  
20 Fruit. In the summer of 2024, I completed a disinformation fellowship through the  
21 Digital Democracy Institute of the Americas’ Capacity-Building Program: Latinos,  
22 Media, and Democracy.

23 **June 8, 2025**

24 6. On June 8, 2025, I was covering protests that were happening in Los  
25 Angeles in response to immigration raids by the U.S. Immigration and Customs  
26 Enforcement. At about 2:00 p.m., I arrived at the intersection of Aliso Street and  
27 Alameda Street, adjacent to federal buildings, in downtown Los Angeles. Large  
28

1 crowds filled the entire block as far as I could see in two directions from the  
2 intersection, while LAPD blocked the other two directions.

3       7. When covering this protest, I clearly identified myself as press. I  
4 carried a press-identification badge in my hand that said “NEWS MEDIA” on the  
5 top of the badge and “PRESS” at the bottom, both printed in large white letters on a  
6 blue background, which is on a lanyard, visible from a distance, and has a photo of  
7 me. When confronted with LAPD officers, I clearly held up this press-identification  
8 badge and verbally identified myself as press. I also carried press-specific  
9 equipment, including a Canon DSLR camera with a large lens, a professional  
10 microphone, and gimbal stabilizer for filming using my phone.

11       8. When I arrived, tear gas was still in the air. The tear gas was apparently  
12 deployed shortly before. Protesters were visibly upset at the use of the tear gas and  
13 raised their voices at LAPD officers, but I did not see the protesters initiate any  
14 violent acts against officers. During this time, I closely observed the front lines of  
15 police and protester interactions and was shoulder to shoulder with LAPD officers  
16 and protestors. Then, while protesters were chanting at LAPD officers, tensions  
17 escalated as officers began deploying less-lethal munitions on the crowd and  
18 physically shoving and grabbing protesters.

19       9. After LAPD officers began shooting protesters without any  
20 justification, I saw a few protesters respond by shoving officers or throwing water  
21 bottles at them. Before LAPD initiated this violence, I had seen no violent or  
22 destructive acts by protesters. I do not know why LAPD started shooting. Even after  
23 they began engaging with officers and I remained close by, I did not feel threatened  
24 by or in danger from the acts of the protesters.

25       10. I moved to a corner of the intersection to try to film the entire crowd  
26 that filled both blocks. While I was standing on the corner between the crowd and a  
27 cement wall, an LAPD officer shoved a person into me, pinning me against the wall.  
28 In response, I told the officer, “Hey, watch it, I’m press.” The officer told me, “If

1 you're press, you need to be behind us," directing me to move away from the police  
2 interactions with the crowd to behind a line of officers separated. I attempted to  
3 challenge the legality of this order, and we negotiated where I could stand back and  
4 forth. Ultimately, the officer told me that if I did not move behind a group of  
5 officers and away from the protesters, I would get hurt.

6       11. Because I did not feel threatened or targeted by any acts of the  
7 protesters and given the officer's warning that I would get hurt if I stayed in that  
8 location, I assumed that the officer meant LAPD would be deploying tear gas there  
9 shortly, as it apparently had before I arrived. Accordingly, I complied with the  
10 officer's direction and began to move behind the line of officers where I was  
11 directed.

12       12. As soon as I moved behind the line of officers, at about 3:00 p.m.,  
13 another LAPD officer, who I had not previously seen or interacted with,  
14 immediately approached me and yelled at me, "If you don't get back, I'm arresting  
15 you right now. I've told you three times that press has to be back a hundred feet." I  
16 had never heard any previous warning from the LAPD that I needed to move back  
17 100 feet from the protesters, and I had just arrived at that location behind the line of  
18 officers to comply with the previous officer's directions.

19       13. Given the second officer's threat of arrest, I complied with his  
20 instructions to move where he directed me, which was an area approximately 150  
21 feet away from the front line of police-protester interactions. LAPD officers made  
22 threats of arrest to other journalists in the area and also pushed them back into the  
23 "press area," as the officers described it, where I was.

24       14. This group of press included journalists who I personally recognized  
25 from MSNBC, CNN, and AP, as well as another reporter who is also a California  
26 Local News Fellow for the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism. There were  
27 approximately 20 to 30 journalists in this confined area. Everyone in the "press  
28 area" wore visible press identification and/or carried professional equipment that

1 identified them as press. A true and correct video I took showing and describing the  
2 confinement of the press to this “press area” more than 100 feet away from protest  
3 activity is published and available here:

4 [https://www.instagram.com/reel/DKp\\_9HZBtUp/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link&igsh=MTA4eWZ3MXFxYzN4Ng==](https://www.instagram.com/reel/DKp_9HZBtUp/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MTA4eWZ3MXFxYzN4Ng==).

6 15. LAPD officers blocked press from moving any closer than  
7 approximately 150 feet from the protesters. In addition to the front line of officers  
8 blocking our access to protesters, there were three law enforcement vehicles parked  
9 behind that line of officers that obscured our view of the protest, and there was  
10 another line of officers in front of the vehicles who ensured the press remained  
11 confined away from the protest under threat of arrest if they returned to reporting on  
12 the protests. Before this confinement, I had been reporting all day between just a  
13 few inches and up to ten feet away from the front line of police-protester  
14 interactions, and I was able to see and report clearly without causing any  
15 interference to the police.

16 16. When I am covering protests, where there is conflict between protesters  
17 and police, I cannot see and report on what is happening when I am 150 feet away  
18 from those interactions, even with my professional camera and large lens.

19 17. Over the next 30 minutes, police pushed this group of press further and  
20 further back. Additional law enforcement vehicles continued to arrive and park  
21 between the “press area” and protests, pushing the press further away. Many of the  
22 journalists, including myself, in the area were upset at LAPD’s apparent violations  
23 of press freedoms, and we repeatedly asked the officers to allow us to return closer  
24 to the protest area as state law requires. LAPD officers did not permit us to return or  
25 allow immediate access to an LAPD supervisor to challenge why access to the  
26 protest was impossible. By the end of these 30 minutes, we had been pushed  
27 approximately 500 feet away from the protesters.

28

1       18. After approximately 30 minutes of confinement to the “press area”  
2 under threat of arrest and negotiations between reporters and officers, the LAPD  
3 officers allowed us to move somewhat closer to the protest, but they continued to  
4 keep us confined under threat of arrest approximately 75 to 100 feet away from the  
5 protesters.

6       19. Even 75 to 100 feet away from the protesters, I could not clearly see  
7 and report on their interactions with law enforcement.

8       20. I remained in this closer “press area” for approximately another 30  
9 minutes, as the LAPD officers did not allow us anywhere to exit. Then, LAPD  
10 officers began moving the parked cars to avoid damage from protesters. At this  
11 point, I asked a different LAPD officer than the one I primarily negotiated with if I  
12 could leave, and the officer told me I could as long as I turned back and went around  
13 the block to cover the protests from the opposite direction, but he still refused to  
14 allow me and other members of the press to cover the front line of police-protester  
15 interactions that was approximately 75 to 100 feet away. I then exited the “press  
16 area” in compliance with the LAPD officer’s instructions.

17       21. I know that the officers who confined the press in this area and  
18 threatened us with arrest if we did not move into it were with the LAPD because the  
19 officers that I saw and interacted all wore uniforms with a visible patch on the left  
20 arm of their jackets that read “Los Angeles Metro Police.”

21       **June 14, 2025**

22       22. On June 14, 2025, I was covering protests near the intersection of Los  
23 Angeles Street and East Temple Street in downtown Los Angeles. I arrived at that  
24 intersection around 10:00 a.m., and the protesters were calm and peaceful. There  
25 were families present, young teenagers flying flags and playing music, and the mood  
26 seemed very positive. People were vocal, chanting and yelling with slight tension  
27 toward law enforcement, but there was no indication that anyone was going to  
28 engage in any illegal acts.

1       23. In fact, there were many moments during the protests on this day when  
2 the protestors brought flowers to lay at the feet of the National Guard and other law  
3 enforcement officers to demonstrate their nonviolent intent and model peaceful  
4 resistance.

5       24. When covering this protest, I again clearly identified myself as press. I  
6 wore the same press-identification badge on a lanyard around my neck and  
7 continued to openly and visibly carry my professional camera, microphone, and  
8 gimbal.

9       25. At approximately 4:10 p.m., I was still reporting on the protest at the  
10 intersection of Los Angeles Street and East Temple Street. With no dispersal  
11 announcement or warning and without any justification, LAPD officers arrived with  
12 horses and began trampling protesters who were doing nothing violent, destructive,  
13 or illegal. Thousands of protesters began attempting to disperse. I did not see any  
14 justification for LAPD's actions—I did not observe any protestors acting violently  
15 or doing anything that could be interpreted as a threat.

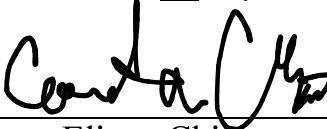
16       26. After the horses arrived, less than five minutes later, at approximately  
17 4:14 p.m., LAPD deployed tear gas and shot less-lethal munitions indiscriminately  
18 into the crowd. I still had heard no announcement or dispersal order before this  
19 occurred. Again, before this occurred, I saw no one in the crowd engaging in any  
20 illegal or destructive acts and no indication that such acts were going to occur. The  
21 crowd included at least 25 other members of the press, visibly identified as such,  
22 who were reporting near me.

23       27. The air became thick with tear gas, and I ran down East Temple Street.  
24 The police had blocked off Los Angeles Street and the opposite direction of East  
25 Temple Street, so there was only one direction for those dispersing to go. I felt  
26 burning and discomfort in my sinuses and eyes and experienced tears from the gas.  
27 The LAPD chased us down the street and then forced us two blocks away from East  
28 Temple Street and kettled the crowd there on foot and horseback. After 20 minutes,

1 the police left, and then I was able to leave the area. A true and correct video I  
2 captured of my experience of this incident is published and available here:  
3 [https://www.instagram.com/reel/DK51Xdvy8OP/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link&igsh=c3U0ZGhhZ3d0Zmc=](https://www.instagram.com/reel/DK51Xdvy8OP/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=c3U0ZGhhZ3d0Zmc=)

5 28. I know that the officers who used horses and shot less-lethal munitions  
6 and tear gas into the crowd were with the LAPD because these officers again all  
7 wore dark blue uniforms with a visible patch on the left arm of their jackets that read  
8 "Los Angeles Metro Police." Los Angeles Metropolitan Police is a unit of the  
9 LAPD.

10 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of  
11 America that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 28 day of June, 2025 at  
12 Venice, CA.



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13 Constanza Eliana Chinea  
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